APRIL 5, 1978

Death of Wadi' Haddad, Palestinian Terrorist

On 1 April, the Beirut headquarters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine announced that Wadi' Haddad, one of the organization's founders, had died on 28 March in an East Berlin hospital. The cause of death was said to be cancer. On 3 April, Haddad was given an official funeral in Baghdad, Iraq; the Iraqi government received the body at the airport with full honors. Among the mourners was George Habbash, co-founder with Haddad of the PFLP, and like Haddad, a doctor of medicine who had become politicized by the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Haddad was best known for his involvement in international terrorist operations; he had been responsible for the first fedayeen hijacking of an El Al aircraft in 1968. His terrorist network became formalized as the Foreign Operations Committee of the PFLP around 1969, and one of his most spectacular operations was the multiple aircraft hijacking that culminated at an obscure airstrip in Jordan in September 1970. Haddad was also successful in recruiting and employing foreigners for his operations, including members of the Japanese Red Army (JRA), Venezuelan terrorist Ilich Ramirez Sanchez (Carlos), and various Europeans, including members of the German Baader-Meinhof gang. Among his bloodier operations was the infamous Lod Airport massacre in Israel, carried out by the JRA in May 1972, in which 25 persons were killed and 76 wounded.

Although Haddad's reputation as being a master planner of international terrorist operations was well deserved, not all of his activities were successful; examples being the Israeli rescue at Entebbe, Uganda, of hostages taken in the hijack of an Air France aircraft in June 1976 and a similar rescue in Somalia by West German commandos after a Lufthansa airplane was hijacked in October 1977.

Unlike his cohort Habbash, Haddad was not a Marxist ideologue. If anything, he was a rightist who sought success through terror, and his tactics brought him into conflict with Habbash from time to time. However, reports that Haddad had been expelled from the PFLP were believed to have been a cover, designed to give Habbash the opportunity to divorce himself from international terrorist acts.

That Haddad's expulsion from the organization was fiction seems to have been established by the announcement of his death by PFLP headquarters and subsequent eulogies by that organization.

Haddad ran his organization with a tight hand, surrounded by a band of dedicated followers. It is not known just who, if any, among these may try to replace him, nor what effect his death will have on future international terrorist activity by his faction of the PFLP. (SECRET)

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